



# The Effects of Trauma on Mental Illness for Justice Involved Youth in Texas

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## ABSTRACT

Youth involved in the justice system, termed Justice-Involved Youth (JIY) have higher rates of mental health problems, trauma exposure, and CPS involvement. There is supporting evidence connecting traumatic experiences and mental health problems in JIY. There is also literature connecting CPS involvement and traumatic experiences (due to the child's displacement). However, there is limited research investigating the psychological effects of CPS on JIY. The goal of this study was to investigate if CPS was linked to increased mental health problems that have been connected with traumatic exposure in a JIY population. MAYSI-2 subscale scores of 153 JIY involved with CPS, termed Crossover Youth (CY), were compared to 140 non-CPS JIY (11-17 years) with a Welch's ANOVA to investigate if CPS exposure and higher rates of mental health problems were connected. The results reflected significantly higher rates of Depression/Anxiety and Traumatic Experience for Crossover Youth.

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

- Justice involved youth (JIY), show higher rates of trauma exposure throughout their lives, which has been linked to higher rates in mental health problems (Dierkhising, 2013; Buffington, 2010).
- Past research supports JIY with a history of Child Protective Service involvement (CPS) have greater rates of mental health problems than non-CPS JIY.
- Youth with a history of CPS and justice system involvement, termed Crossover Youth (CY), are at a higher risk of staying in the justice system (Herz, 2010)
- There is a gap in current literature for possible relations between CPS and JIY with a history of trauma.

### STUDY GOAL

- The study's goal was to explore the possible relations linking CPS and mental health problems among CY and non-CPS JIY.

## METHOD

### HYPOTHESIS

- It was hypothesized that CY would show higher MAYSI-2 subscale scores in comparison to the JIY, demonstrating that CY have higher mental health problem rates than non-CPS JIY.

### PARTICIPANT DATA

- Participants were 153 CY and 140 non-CPS JIY arrested and were processed through the Texas Juvenile Justice Department from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2014.
- Participant CY and non-CPS JIY were matched by age range (ages 11-17) and exposure to trauma (i.e. positive screening for physical, emotional, and/or sexual maltreatment).
- Permission was given by the principal investigator of the Youth Pathways Project to use the data.

### MEASURES

- During intake, juveniles were given the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument-Version 2 (MAYSI-2).
  - MAYSI-2 is a mental health screening tool administered at intake that consists of 7 subscales
    - Alcohol and Drug Use
    - Angry-Irritable
    - Depressed-Anxious
    - Somatic Complaints
    - Suicidal Ideation
    - Thought Disturbance (only for male JIY)
    - Traumatic Experience
- Patient information regarding MAYSI-2 subscale scores, traumatic experiences, and CPS history was then compared between CY and non-CPS JIY.

## RESULTS

- Welch's ANOVA analysis was performed to compare mean scores in each MAYSI subscale between JIY and Crossover Youth
- P-value  $<.05$  was considered to be significant

### SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

- CY showed significantly higher mean scores on the following scales:
  - Depression-Anxiety ( $F(1,282)=9.377, p=.002$ )
  - Traumatic Experience ( $F(1, 282)=7.131, p=.008$ )

### NON-SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

- No significant mean differences were found in the following scale ratings:
  - Alcohol and Drug Use ( $F(1, 280)=1.441, p=.231$ )
  - Anger/Irritability ( $F(1, 282)=1.281, p=.259$ )
  - Somatic Complaints ( $F(1,282)=2.744, p=.099$ )
  - Suicidal Ideation ( $F(1, 282)=3.381, p=.067$ )
  - Thought Disturbance ( $F(1, 167)=3.177, p=.077$ ; only males compared)

## DISCUSSION

### CONCLUSIONS

- Analysis results partially confirmed the hypothesis that CY would report poorer mental health than non-CPS JIY.
  - Higher mean ratings of depression/anxiety and traumatic experience-related symptoms
- The current study's results were consistent with past findings between CY and mental health exhibiting higher rates of mental health symptoms in CY (Herz, 2010).

### LIMITATIONS

- The participants were limited geographically to Texas.
- Use of a single measure for juvenile psychopathology.
- The findings of the study may not be applicable to the general population.

### IMPLICATIONS/FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- CY may require specific interventions that target higher exposure to trauma, with more severe depression, and anxiety symptomology.
- Future research should differentiate participants by gender and trauma type and include youth involved in the child welfare system without justice system involvement to investigate possible protective factors from trauma.

## REFERENCES

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